



selection from *Topdog/Underdog*

By Suzan Lori-Parks

In this scene, Booth and Lincoln are two unfortunately named brothers, living together in a run-down modern-day apartment. This excerpt is deceptively complex and nuanced, and your students will love to read it and act it out—in fact, many of them may ask to borrow a copy of the play from you to read more of it. Ask students: Why is this play called *Topdog/Underdog*? What are these two brothers competing over? Who is winning? Who is the top dog? When does it change and how? Note: The misspellings here are intentional. Lori-Parks creates voice through writing dialogue as the characters themselves would write it.

Booth: You like this place?

Lincoln: Ssallright.

Booth: But a little cramped sometimes, right?

Lincoln: You dont hear me complain. Although that recliner sometimes Booth, man—no Booth, right—man, Im too old to be sleeping in that chair.

Booth: Its my place. You don't got a place. Cookie, she threw you out. And you can seem to get another woman. Yr lucky I let you stay.

Lincoln: Every Friday you say mi casa es su casa.

Booth: Every Friday you come home with yr paycheck. Today is Thursday and I tell you brother, its a long way from Friday to Friday. All kinds of things can happen. All kinds of bad feelings can surface and erupt while yr little brother waits for you to bring in yr share. (rest) I got my Thursday head on, Link. Go get the food.

Lincoln doesn't budge.

Lincoln: You dont got no running water in here, man.

Booth: So?

Lincoln: You dont got no toilet you dont got no sink.

Booth: Bathrooms down the hall.

Lincoln: You living in the Third World, fool! Hey, I'll get tuh food. (Lincoln goes to get the food...) Thats soup and thats sauce. I got you the meat and I got me the skrimps.

Booth: I wanted the skrimps.

Lincoln: You said you wanted the meat. This morning when I left you said you wanted meat. (Rest) Here, man, take the skrimps. No sweat. (They eat...)